



Significant under Criterion A for its associations with development of Belle Meade and under Criterion C as "textbook" example of circa 1900 trends in concrete arch design.

Belle Meade, one of Tennessee's outstanding plantation complexes and one of the country's best thoroughbred nurseries, was in severe financial trouble by 1900. Between 1902 and 1904, the owners disposed of much of the property. A group of businessmen headed by Judge J. M. Dickinson purchased 2,200 acres of the Belle Meade estate that included the old deer park and formed the Belle Meade Land Company. This company began a residential development on 250 acres in 1906, and by September an exclusive subdivision named Belle Meade Park had opened. In 1912 the Land Company conveyed its roads to Davidson County for public use (see #33, 19' NonHighway'9; Coop 1969; Davidson Quarterly Court Minutes Volume 1:136-138; Ellis 1983; Tidwell 1983).

Landscape gardeners O. G. Simonds and Company of Chicago prepared the design for the spatial arrangement of Belle Meade Park. This design retained the natural beauty of the old deer park while situating residential tracts along four miles of macadamized road that formed two big loops, much like a figure-eight. The contract for grading and building the road was let in April 1906 to the Nashville firm Sharpe and Company. An August newspaper article described the bridge as "one of the handsomest and probably the most artistic arched stone bridge in the state." The same article described the entrance as:

artistic and most picturesque. A fine stone fence has been built at the entrance and curves in toward the park, seeming to give invitation for all to enter. The boulevard begins in this entrance and leads directly over a graceful stone arched bridge of cut stone, which crosses the creek, and one is then in the park proper (*Nashville Banner*, 30 August 1906).

Despite the newspaper's description of a masonry arch, the bridge is actually a closed spandrel concrete arch faced with stone. It is 112.8 feet in length with a 50-foot arch. The bridge has a curb-to-curb width of 30.0 feet and an out-to-out width of 33.2 feet. Railings, built of coursed stone with crenellating end posts and topped with a row of flat stones, run the length of the bridge. These railings each contain two offset observation balconies. Between the bridge and the main road is a handsome landscaped stone wall denoting the entry to Belle Meade Park, which remains today as an exclusive residential area in suburban Nashville.